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SUBJECT: PROVINCIAL ASSESSMENT OF JAM CEASEFIRE

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Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR MATT TUELLER FOR 1.4 (b) and (d).

[11](#). (C) SUMMARY: According to PRT reporting Muqtada al-Sadr's August 30th declaration "freezing" Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM) operations has had no real impact on JAM-associated violence in the south. This lack of impact highlights the fragmentary nature of JAM and raises questions about Sadr,s relevancy. END SUMMARY.

Background

[12](#). (C) On August 27-28 the annual Shi'a holiday of Shabiniyah was disrupted by fighting between gunmen and security forces in Karbala. Members of Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM) were widely held to be responsible. In response, Sadr issued a statement on August 30 calling for a 6-month "freeze" on all JAM operations. This cable collects reporting from PRTs, ePRTs, and REOs in southern governorates to evaluate the impact of Sadr's "freeze" and its implications on U.S. policy.

Muthanna

[13](#). (C) Muthanna has seen a decrease in violence in recent weeks, but the PRT assesses that decrease is due more to the police crackdown that followed the August 20th assassination of Governor Muhammed el-Hassani (ISCI), than to Sadr,s announcement. This crackdown further weakened JAM's already precarious position in the province. Tribal protection for JAM members does not extend beyond a few senior commanders and JAM must rely on IP forces for protection. Public sentiment is turning against not just JAM and the Sadr Trend but Islamist parties in general for their corruption and their failure to improve everyday life in the province.

Wasit

[14](#). (S/ REL USA, ACGU) One of EPRT Wasit's local staff members was assassinated by suspected JAM militants only hours after Sadr,s announcement and August 2007 was the most violent month yet for attacks on CF. During the last week of August, CF reduced presence in several JAM dominated neighborhoods, resulting in fewer attacks in September. 214th FiB staff assesses the attacks (primarily SAF, IDP or EFP) would increase if they were to resume activity in the JAM controlled areas.

[15](#). (C) Wasit,s cities and towns remain JAM/Sadr strongholds. The provincial government, nominally controlled by an ISCI/Badr and Da,wa alliance, has come under increasing Sadrist influence. (Note: We believe the independent but Da,wa linked Governor has accepted a JAM personal security detail after the recent governor assassinations.) JAM dominates the provincial capital, Al Kut. The mayor and

entire city council are members of JAM and 15 of 18 neighborhoods are either controlled by JAM-infiltrated Iraqi Police units or administered with mafia tactics by JAM members. Both JAM and Badr Corps smuggle Iranian lethal aid and money across the border and JAM recruits regularly cross the border to train in Iran.

Babil

¶6. (C) PRT reports no decrease in violence following the August 30 cease-fire: attacks attributed to JAM since that date include the Sept. 3 assassination of the Kufa deputy police chief and continued mortar attacks on Hilla. Local JAM members immediately began reading exceptions into the proclamation. PRT assesses that since the "freeze" local JAM supporters have provided less funding to JAM cells to finance attacks. However, Iranian agents are providing funds to make up for the shortfall and Iranian Special Groups remain active in the province.

¶7. (C) 4/25 EPRT based in N. Babil assess the cease-fire announcement to be a public relations tactic designed to bolster image of Sadr as a political player and emphasize Sadr's capacity to control JAM units. EFPs are the preferred tactic of JAM in N. Babil. 1 EFP attack occurred in 4/25's area of operations (AO) between 14-31 August and 5 occurred between 1-15 September. Brigade/Division intelligence assesses the frequency of EFP use is based largely on supply.

Diwaniyah

¶7. (C) Local contacts report a modest reduction in violence that cannot with any certainty be attributed to Sadr's announcement. The PRT assesses that JAM elements in Diwaniyah are only notionally under Sadr's control.

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Maysan

¶8. (C) The Maysan Governorate is dominated by JAM and Sadr but relatively peaceful following the withdrawal of all Coalition Forces. Based on its interactions, the PRT assesses the allegiance of Maysani politicians to Sadr is practical rather than ideological. Officials say they have Sadr's permission to cooperate with the PRT as long as the relationship benefits the people of the province. The lack of CF presence in Maysan makes JAM activity difficult to assess.

Basrah

¶9. (S) Although there was a brief yet palpable decrease in violence against CF (only one IDF against the British Air Station between August 17 and September 14), that decrease seems to be the result of a ceasefire that the British reportedly negotiated with JAM in early August, prior to the withdrawal of MNF-SE from the Basrah Palace. However, there was an IDF attack against the Air Station on September 15, and REO contacts report that other forms of militia (including JAM) violence against citizens, including assassinations, continues to occur. There are reports of rogue or breakaway JAM elements that intend to resume attacks against Coalition forces.

10.(C) COMMENT: The level of JAM violence across the south appears to be driven primarily by local, not national, conditions. Factors related to JAM activity include the relative power of Sadr/JAM versus other blocs, the presence or lack thereof of Coalition Forces, and the strength of tribal networks. In no province have our PRTs seen a reduction of violence that can be confidently attributed to

Sadr,s ceasefire order. This suggests that it is a mistake to conceptualize JAM as a coherent military force. Depending on the province, "JAM" can mean tribal groupings, disenfranchised youth, Iranian special groups, government officials or police, etc. Multiple and opposing "JAM" groups are often found in the same governorate. The common denominator among these groups is often only the name itself, and their relationship to Sadr and any national movement varies considerably. Sadr ordered the freeze to respond to public outcry over Karbala and reassert command and control over JAM. The lack of a clear reduction in violence suggests Sadr lacks control over many JAM elements and highlights the fragmentary nature of the movement. END COMMENT.
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